

NEW JERSEY STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

PARTNERSHIPS IN CHARACTER EDUCATION

PROGRAM NARRATIVE

1. Management Structure, Project Goals and Objectives

[Selection Criteria (1): The extent to which project objectives are significant, clearly identified, measurable, and likely to be achieved.]

The organization of state oversight, project management and service provider relationships has been planned to insure that the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) will be able to provide technical and professional assistance to its ten designated collaborating partner local educational agencies (LEAs) and to other interested LEAs and nonpublic schools throughout the state. The diagram on page seven summarizes these organizational and service relationships. Governor James McGreevey established a Character Education Commission in February 2002 to advise him regarding what constitutes best practices in character education and examining options for communities and school districts as they undertake the development of effective character education programs. The 28-member Commission consisting of teachers, school administrators, clergy, university professors, and community representatives will deliver a report and recommendations to the Governor by September 2002 (see Appendix C). These recommendations, based on the results of five public hearings and the testimony of more than seventy individuals, will be provided to the Department of Education and the Advisory Board established by Commissioner of Education William Librera to oversee the development of and implementation of the Partnerships in Character Education Grant Program.

The proposed service delivery structure represented here rests on fourteen years of experience implementing character education in New Jersey schools, as well as a first review of

the testimony received by the Character Education Commission during May and June 2002. State aid in the amount of \$4.75 million, committed in the Governor's budget to character education services, will provide funding for program development in LEAs based on an enrollment formula, and the federal grant funds will be used to provide technical assistance, professional development and evaluation services to the designated LEA partners and the Character Education Network, a voluntary network of 1400 interested LEAs and nonpublic educators. Combining state and federal resources with the experience New Jersey has gained in supporting broad school adoption of effective character education practices holds great promise for creating a system of programs that will be sustained by well-trained professionals and dedicated involvement from students, parents and community members.

The establishment of the New Jersey Center for Character Education (NJCCE) in a public college or university as the management hub for implementing grant objectives will serve as a focal point for dissemination of innovation, enriched networking, and sound program evaluation and development practices as the field progresses, with the 10 collaborating LEAs serving as demonstration sites. Because of the time required to complete a competitive selection process, a decision regarding the location of the Center will not be completed until September 2002. Four leading colleges or universities have expressed an intent to bid on a contract to become the new Center: Montclair State University; Rutgers the State University; Richard Stockton State College; and the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (see Appendix M. for their letters of intent and statements of qualification). Leadership for the Center will be provided by a director with 25 years of experience in developing health and social service prevention services in community and education settings and seven years of experience developing character education programs in New Jersey schools.

Collaborating partners that will consult with and assist the NJCCE include two of the most prominent national organizations in advocating for high program standards and effective practices in character education (the Character Education Partnership and the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning); as well as two higher education institutions with strong teacher preparation programs (Fairleigh Dickinson University and The College of New Jersey); the Civics Education Consortium (a broad-based group of community service organizations, local government leaders, students and educators); a community-based nonprofit organization with experience in the delivery of peer and parent social skill development and school change programs throughout the state (the Princeton Center for Leadership Training); and experts in the use of digital technology for innovative learning strategies at Columbia University's Center for New Media Teaching and Learning.

More than 100 service providers who are currently offering programs in New Jersey schools are listed in the Character Education Program Resources Profile Directory published annually by the NJDOE. The Directory was developed as part of the current state character education initiative. The Directory is updated on the NJDOE website, www.state.nj.us/njded/chared, throughout the year as well (see Appendix E. for the list and a sample of descriptive entries). While the research basis for these programs varies, each program has supplied an evidence of effectiveness statement, which is summarized in the document.

School districts throughout the state have used character education state aid funds in combination with other federal resources, such as Title IV, Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities funds to support their character education program development efforts, using programs and resources from the Directory, as well as 'home-grown' approaches. This same pattern, which districts report has been of great assistance, will continue and expand in the

proposed project, with an increased emphasis on the use of research-based program selections, as described in section 2. of this narrative. In addition, the NJDOE has made a commitment to make character education a priority program area in structuring the New Jersey's 21st Century Community Learning Center grant program under the No Child Left Behind Act and enhanced coordination with the New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Education.

Goals and Objectives – Year One

(Note: Due to the restrictions in length of the application narrative, a complete set of objectives for all four years of the project have been included in Appendix F.)

Goal 1 The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) will form an Advisory Board representing public and private school educators, parents, and students, including students with disabilities, to assist with the design and implementation of the Partnerships in Character Education Grant Program.

Year 1 Objectives:

- 1.1 Form a preliminary Advisory Board to assist in reviewing and refining the concepts and early drafts of the NJDOE grant application by June 2002. (Responsibility: NJDOE)
- 1.2 Form a student subcommittee of the Advisory Board, including students with disabilities, to review and provide input on the grant application and plans by June 2002.
(Responsibility: NJDOE)
- 1.3 Expand and formalize the membership and functions of the Advisory Board following approval of the NJDOE grant application by October 2002. (Responsibility: NJDOE)
- 1.4 Hold at least three meetings of the Advisory Board to assist the NJDOE in further design and implementation of the Partnerships in Character Education Grant Program by September 2003. (Responsibility: NJDOE)

Goal 2 The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) will establish the New Jersey Center for Character Education (NJCCE), through a memorandum of agreement with a state college or university, to assist the state to manage, support and evaluate the federal Partnerships in Character Education Grant Program and assist in evaluating the state's New Jersey Character Education Partnership Initiative.

Year 1 Objectives:

- 2.1 Solicit letters of interest from New Jersey state colleges and universities to serve as the management center responsible for implementing the federal Partnerships in Character Education Grant Program by May 2002. (Responsibility: NJDOE)
- 2.1 Develop and disseminate a request for proposals to interested state college and university bidders by August 2002. (Responsibility: NJDOE)
- 2.2 Contract with a selected state college or university (hereafter called the New Jersey Center for Character Education – NJCCE) to manage and deliver specified activities, including technical assistance and program evaluation services, through a memorandum of agreement by October 2002. (Responsibility: NJDOE)
- 2.3 Develop and approve a detailed year one activity plan for the NJCCE by November 2002. (Responsibility: NJCCE; NJDOE)
- 2.4 Monitor and provide administrative and programmatic oversight for contract performance by NJCCE by June 2003. (Responsibility: NJDOE.)

Goal 3 Working through the New Jersey Center for Character Education, the NJDOE and its designated collaborating partner school district demonstration sites will foster the development and delivery of high quality character education programs and the capacity to

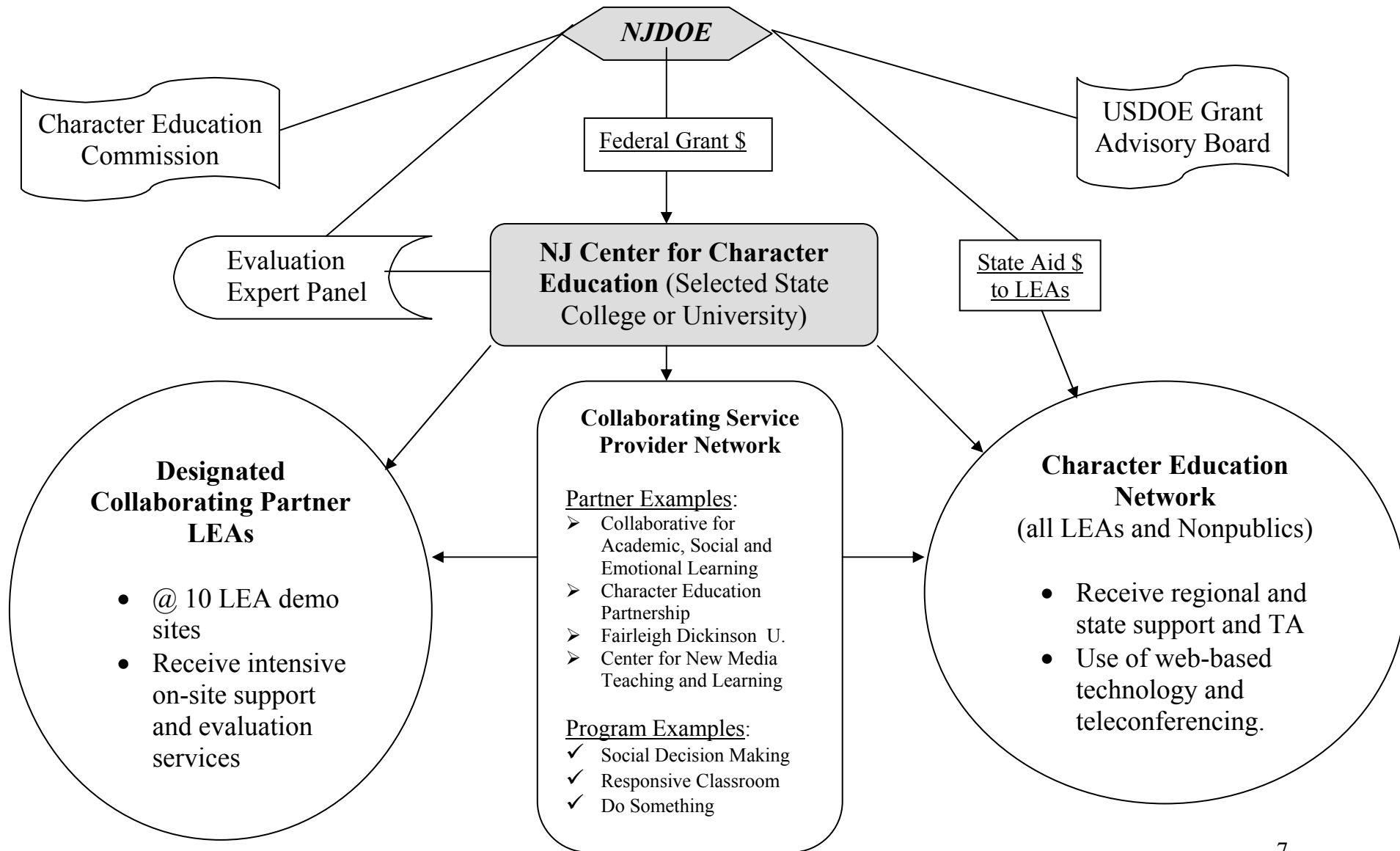
deliver related services to students, including disabled students, and parents in New Jersey schools.

Year 1 Objectives:

- 3.1 Obtain commitments from the three State Operated School Districts (Newark, Jersey City and Paterson) to continue to serve as collaborating partners to develop character education programs and services and as demonstration sites for dissemination of best practices by June 2002. (Responsibility: NJDOE)
- 3.2 Issue a request for proposals for the purpose of selecting approximately seven additional collaborating partner school districts representing diverse geographic and demographic profiles by July 2002. (Responsibility: NJDOE in consultation with the Character Education Partnership)
- 3.3 Select approximately seven additional school districts with high quality character education programs and establish agreements with them to serve as collaborating partner LEAs for the purpose of serving as character education demonstration and dissemination sites by September 2002. (Responsibility: NJDOE)
- 3.4 Initiate and complete a program review and improvement process for each of the collaborating partner LEAs, utilizing national and state expert consultants identified by the NJCCE and collaborating partner agencies by January 2003. (Responsibility: NJCCE in consultation with the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning, Princeton Center for Leadership Training and the Character Education Partnership)

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Vision of Organizational and Service Relationships



- 3.5 Consult with each collaborating partner LEA regarding the program review and improvement report recommendations and develop a three-year strategic plan for program development consistent with other school reform efforts and best practice dissemination; select and purchase character education library materials for each LEA, by April 2003. (Responsibility: NJCCE in consultation with collaborating partner agencies)
- 3.6 Subcontract with scientifically based character education program providers to offer services to collaborating partner LEAs consistent with LEA strategic plans by May 2003. (Responsibility: NJCCE in consultation with collaborating partner agencies)
- 3.7 Initiate curriculum infusion consistent with NJ Core Curriculum Content Standards, administrator and teacher training, policy planning consistent with other school reform efforts and related activities and services by June 2003. (Responsibility: Collaborating partner LEAs and program providers, with oversight by NJCCE)

Goal 4 Working through the New Jersey Center for Character Education, the NJDOE will create a system of guidance and technical assistance for character educators through access to state-of-the-art professional development resources which will support the ability of LEAs, communities and New Jersey educators to enhance and expand their roles in providing character education and related social/emotional learning opportunities to all New Jersey students.

Year 1 Objectives:

- 4.1 Identify and review character education programs that are based on scientifically based research as defined in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Title IX, Part A, Sec. 9101 (37) by October 2002. (Responsibility: NJDOE in consultation with the NJCCE, the

Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning and the Character Education Partnership)

- 4.2 Continue to identify quality character education programs and resource materials to be added to the 160 providers identified in the NJDOE 2001 document, Character Education Program Resources Profile Directory, by October 2002. (Responsibility: NJDOE in consultation with NJCCE)
- 4.3 Continuously update program and evaluation information and resources on the NJDOE Web site and link to the Principals and Parents: Promoting Youth Development and Discipline CD ROM project, beginning in October 2002. (Responsibility: NJCCE in consultation with NJDOE)
- 4.4 Update and expand the 1400 person New Jersey Character Education Network database and construct a project listserve for the purpose of providing targeted information and resources to identified users by November 2002. (Responsibility: NJCCE in consultation with NJDOE)
- 4.5 Plan and pilot test information dissemination strategies and the use of digital technology and distance learning opportunity structures and content using the New Jersey Professional Education Port, Virtual Academy and develop and offer at least one character education course through the Virtual Academy by August 2003. (Responsibility: NJDOE in consultation with the NJCCE, the Columbia University Center for New Media Teaching and Learning and other collaborating partner agencies.)
- 4.6 Hold one-day regional technical assistance and networking conference for LEAs and nonpublic schools by April 2003. (Responsibility: NJCCE)

4.7 Facilitate the creation of a statewide membership organization of ethics and character educators by May 2003. (Responsibility: NJCCE in cooperation with the New Jersey Center for HealthCare Ethics and the Civic Education Consortium)

Goal 5 Working through the New Jersey Center for Character Education and with other public and private colleges and universities, the NJDOE and its partners will explore, test and disseminate models for preparing new teachers, student services personnel, and school administrators in character education and social/emotional learning in order to support student academic and social development.

Year 1 Objectives:

5.1 Identify character education related preservice training efforts and key contacts in New Jersey teacher preparation institutions by November 2002. (Responsibility: NJCCE)

5.2 Plan and implement an invitational conference for representatives from New Jersey teacher preparation institutions by March 2003. (Responsibility: NJCCE in consultation with the Character Education Partnership and the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning the Civic Education Consortium).

5.3 Develop an activity plan for facilitating the development of courses and programs in character education and social/emotional learning at teacher preparation institutions by April 2003. (Responsibility: NJCCE)

Goal 6 The New Jersey Center for Character Education will establish an evaluation panel consisting of recognized national experts in the field of character education and social/emotional learning program evaluation, chaired by an agency external to the NJCCE, to plan and guide a four-year evaluation of the New Jersey Partnerships in Character Education program.

Year 1 Objectives:

- 6.1 Finalize an agreement with the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) to select a qualified evaluator to serve as chair of the Expert Panel for the Evaluation of the New Jersey Partnerships in Character Education program by July 2002. (Responsibility: NJDOE)
- 6.2 Select three additional evaluators to serve on the Expert Panel by August 2002. (Responsibility: NJDOE in consultation with the Character Education Partnership and CASEL)
- 6.3 Convene an initial meeting of the Expert Panel to review the general project evaluation plan for the ten collaborating partner LEAs and the state funded character education program activity and make recommendations by October 2002. (Responsibility: NJDOE and NJCCE)
- 6.4 Convene a second meeting of the Expert Panel to review the status of outcome data from the state funded character education program initiative for FY 2001-2002 by December 2002. (Responsibility: NJCCE and NJDOE).
- 6.5 Make study recommendations for evaluation of programs in the ten collaborating partner LEAs, using a combination of quasi-experimental designs, scientifically based program standard measures and action research techniques, based on the strategic plans of the LEAs by June 2003. (Responsibility: NJCCE)
- 6.6 Convene a third meeting of the Expert Panel to review the LEA study plans and recommend refinements in study designs, strategies, data collection methods, and reporting by September 2003. (Responsibility: NJDOE and NJCCE)

2. Selection of Research Based Programs

[Selection Criteria (2): The extent to which the applicant utilizes scientifically based research to select character education program components that are likely to foster character in students and achieve project objectives.]

The NJDOE will use five different strategies to ensure that school districts make character education program choices that utilize scientifically based research:

- 1) Demonstration site requirement: The ten selected collaborating LEA partner demonstration sites will be offered services through grant funds only for those components of their strategic plans that represent new, or expansions of existing, research-based programs, which will begin with a review by NJCCE of character education programs based on scientific research, in consultation with the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) and the Character Education Partnership (CEP) (see objectives 3.6 and 4.1).
- 2) Program evaluation oversight: The Evaluation Expert Panel will be charged with the responsibility of providing recommendations to the NJDOE and the NJCCE regarding the most effective ways to guide the collaborating LEA partners and the other participating school districts (which currently represent almost all of New Jersey LEAs and charter schools) in formulating program objectives that will move toward the goal of rigorous, systematic and objective procedures necessary to obtain reliable and valid knowledge relevant to the growth of character education activities and programs, as defined in Appendix II of the notice inviting applications (see objectives 6.4, 6.5, and 6.6). The proposed chair of the Evaluation Expert Panel, Dr. Mary Utne O'Brien, is especially

qualified to provide necessary leadership in this regard because of her position as the Associate Director for CASEL (see 4, below).

- 3) Providing effective program models: The work of the collaborating LEA partners will be featured through conferences and innovative Web-based professional development instruction and courses (see objectives 3.10, 3.15, 4.1, and 4.5).
- 4) Providing access to research based program literature and information: The NJDOE has an active Web site that receives an average of 2600 visits per month during the school year. The Web site will be a central vehicle for providing access to information such as links to critically important guidance documents. For example, under contract to the U.S. Department of Education, the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) is ready to release Safe and Sound, An Education Leader's Guide to Student Success Through Social and Emotional Learning. This guide is based on a comprehensive evaluation of 225 school-based programs (grades K-12) that promote children's social and emotional development. The purpose of the guide is to provide educators, program developers, scientists, policy makers, and the general public with a description of the key components of quality programs based on the current state of scientific knowledge regarding what theory, research, and best educational practice indicate are needed to address children's capacities to recognize and manage their emotions, empathize with others, establish pro-social goals and make responsible decisions, and use a variety of interpersonal skills to effectively and ethically handle developmentally relevant tasks. The guide summarizes the degree to which available programs incorporate these components.

An additional communication vehicle for disseminating effective program information will be the New Jersey Character Education Network database of over 1400 educators, parents and community advocates and more than 600 identified character education project coordinators in LEAs. This communication network will be digitally upgraded and be provided with ongoing information and links to research based program information (see objectives 4.2, 4.3, 4.4 and 4.7).

- 5) Recognizing school character education programs with evidence of effectiveness: The NJDOE has established a “Best Practices, Star Schools” recognition program, which annually selects high quality programs of merit based on a rigorous peer review process. There is a “Character Education/Civics” application category to which schools with effective programs are encouraged to apply. Schools that have received awards have been and will be asked to showcase their programs as part of regional and statewide conference events. (See Appendix G. for a list of the four winning programs for the 2001-02 school year. In addition, this year two of the ten schools selected for the prestigious “Star School” award featured character education programs.)

3. Integration of Program Activities

[Selection Criteria (3): The extent to which the character education program activities are integrated into teacher professional development, curricula, materials, and classroom instruction.]

Integration of program activities into professional development, curricula, materials, and classroom instruction will be accomplished using a variety of existing and new leadership structures.

- 1) Current New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards (CCCS): New Jersey has been a leader in promoting the infusion of character education into locally developed curricula. The forthcoming publication by the Character Education Partnership, Making Character Education a “Standard” Part of Education (CEP, in press) features a guidance document that the NJDOE has used in statewide and regional workshops to illustrate how six core values or elements of character can be used as the basis for creating an infusion framework for two of the eight standards areas: Comprehensive Health and Physical Education, and Social Studies (see Appendix H.).

For example, the core value of “caring” (defined as: All students will learn how a caring attitude and caring acts facilitate positive human relations and social growth) can be infused into three different health standards. One of these, Standard 2.2: All students will learn health-enhancing personal, interpersonal, and life skills, for example, contains the following cumulative student progress indicator for grade 12:

- *Describe and demonstrate effective communication skills, decision-making skills, negotiation skills, and assertiveness in situations that influence adolescent health and safety.*

The family life education standard includes the following indicator that is cited for infusion of the caring core value for grade 4:

- *Identify ways to show affection and caring that are appropriate for children.*

- 2) A Frameworks publication subsequently developed and widely disseminated by the NJDOE, and supported through workshops and training, contains sample lesson plans for each student progress indicator, and the NJDOE staff responsible for the framework training also presented specific infusion training at NJDOE sponsored character

education conferences. The same pattern will be used again in the conferences proposed here (see objectives 3.6 and 3.10).

- 3) Revised Standards: The CCCS, originally adopted in 1996, are in the process of a scheduled revision which will be completed in 2002, based on a number of national expert critiques of the 1996 standards, educator panel recommendations and considerable public input. The proposed revisions will allow for an even richer process for infusion than the original standards. In the standards for Comprehensive Health and Physical Education, there are two new strands (organizational tools allowing teachers to locate specific content and skills) which will facilitate the teaching of character education: 2.1 F. Social and Emotional Health and 2.2 D. Developing Character and Leadership. An example of a student indicator for grade 4 is –

- *Describe character traits such as trustworthiness, responsibility, respect, caring, justice and fairness, and civic virtue and citizenship.*

In the revised Social Studies Standard 6.1 (Civics) All students will demonstrate knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the foundation, values, and principles of American democracy and the rights, responsibilities and roles of a citizen in a democratic society, contains the following student progress indicators: By the end of Grade 2, students will:

- *Know that a responsibility means something you must or should do.*
- *Explore simple concepts of diversity, tolerance and respect for others.*

In proposed standard 6.2, social studies is presented in the interdisciplinary context of the humanities and the guiding description of the standard states that one of the purposes of this approach is that “It will facilitate students’ efforts to recognize, analyze and give

expression to the moral, ethical, and even aesthetic challenges that humans face, and to make well-informed choices for the future.”

- 4) Newark School District Curriculum Infusion: One outcome of New Jersey’s last federal character education grant was the development and implementation of a major curriculum infusion project which focused on integrating character education within the context of the planned renewal process for the language arts and literacy curriculum in grades 1 through 4, and in the social studies curriculum for grades 5 through 8. These projects were designed to respond to the state curriculum standards and court-ordered school reform mandates. Following extensive field-testing in more than 30 schools and revisions, the Character Education Literacy Infusion Guides and Character Education Instructional Handbook – Social Studies Infusion documents will be made available through the Character Education Network. The infusion process was part of a workshop selected as a presentation at the CEP annual forum in 2001. While the literacy guide provides a sophisticated, teacher supported approach to teaching six core ethical values through language arts, the social studies curriculum provides students with opportunities to: (a) Discuss individual responsibility; (b) Review and evaluate activities that involve reflection about moral/ethical issues in their own lives and history; and (c) Evaluate evidence of understanding of personal growth in matters of character. (See Appendix I. for a summary of the infusion process across curriculum areas and sample lessons.)
- (5) Students With Disabilities Project: Working with the Advisory Board and the NJDOE Office of Special Education Programs, the NJCCE will develop and disseminate print and other resources that focus on planning the successful transition of students with disabilities from separate special education placements to less restrictive general

education programs. This would include building effective collaboration between general and special education personnel; developing peer relationships; and promoting a caring environment for students and their families (see objective 4.9)

(6) Enhanced Professional Development Opportunities. Professional development will be offered in relationship to the Core Curriculum Content Standards, as noted above, and using successful programs developed by the collaborating LEA partners and Star School Best Practice Programs through conferences and networking opportunities through the Character Education Network data-base listserve (see Goal 4). Internet-based courses will be developed and offered through the NJDOE sponsored New Jersey Professional Education Port, Virtual Academy (see objective 4.5). In addition, a working group of higher education professionals will be identified from public and private colleges and universities interested in developing or enhancing character education courses and programs (see Goal 5).

(7) Principals and Parents Promoting Youth Development and Discipline Project. The NJCCE will work with the NJDOE and the Advisory Board to facilitate dissemination and utilization of a Title IV funded project that is producing and disseminating products and training to empower parents to assist each other and their children in the growth of positive developmental assets, promoting positive discipline practices and bonding to school (see objective 4.3 and Appendix J.).

4. Project Advisory Board and Collaborating Partner Organizations

[Selection Criteria (4): The extent and ongoing nature of the involvement of students, parents and community, such as faith-based organizations, in the design, implementation , and evaluation of the project.]

The NJDOE has established an Advisory Board for the specific purpose of reviewing and refining the conceptual design, objectives and implementation of the Partnerships in Character Education Grant Program project. The initial Advisory Board consists of representatives from the following organizations (a complete list of the individuals can be found in Appendix D.):

- i. Social Emotional Learning Resource Teacher, Plainfield School District (Middle-sized urban LEA)
- ii. Elementary School Principal, Hamilton School District (Large suburban LEA)
- iii. Director of Religious Education, Diocese of Metuchen (and representing the state's Nonpublic Education Advisory Committee)
- iv. Director, Fairleigh Dickinson School of Education (private institution of higher education)
- v. Executive Director, New Jersey Community Development Corporation (a multi-service community development organization which also manages a magnet high school)
- vi. Supervisor of Guidance, Jersey City School District (large urban LEA)
- vii. Executive Director, Newark Do Something (a community-based youth leadership development organization)
- viii. President, New Jersey Parent and Teachers Association (and representing the Leadership for Educational Excellence group – leaders of the largest state education professional and advocacy organizations, including the NJ School Boards Association, the NJ Education Association, the NJ Principals and Supervisors Association and the NJ Association of School Administrators)

- ix. President, Princeton Center for Leadership Training (professional development and peer leadership private, nonprofit agency)
- x. Manager, NJDOE Program Improvement Regional Center (provides monitoring and technical assistance services to special needs school districts)
- xi. Executive Director, New Jersey Commission on National and Community Service
- xii. Chairperson, State Rehabilitation Council, Project Director for the Statewide Parent Advocacy Network, Inc. (the state's federally funded Parents Training and Information Network for students with disabilities and their families) and school board member.
- xiii. Executive Director, New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Education

A separate group of student representatives is being selected and interviewed to learn about the project and provide input to the Advisory Board. They will be hosted by the Network for Family Life Education's teen editorial board. The students will consist of representatives from the following organizations:

- State and County 4-H Teen Council Members
- New Jersey Association of Student Council, Statewide Student Council
- Family, Community and Career Leaders of America, New Jersey Chapter
- Do Something (youth leadership development and service learning nonprofit organization)
- Network for Family Life Education (youth editorial advisory board member)
- The NJDOE Office of Special Education Programs (a disabled student will be chosen from school district Student Leadership teams)

Following an initial meeting of the Student Advisory Board, recommendations for formal and informal relationships with the project Advisory Board will be made, with a decision by the Advisory Board and NJDOE made by October 2002.

Another source of student input will come from the Governor's School of Public Issues, a summer school for exceptional high school students from throughout New Jersey that will have a Research Colloquium in August 2002 entitled "The Making of an Education: Focus on the New Jersey Character Education Partnership." Following structured research and discussion, the students will submit their recommendations to the Governor's Character Education Commission and the NJDOE.

In addition, the ten collaborating LEA partners will be required to have a representative planning and implementation committee or project council following the guidelines in the authorizing legislation (see Appendix K for LEA requirements). One of the designated partners, the Newark Public Schools, already has a group that closely aligns with the requirements (see Appendix L)

Collaborating Partners: The initial group of collaborating partner agencies and organizations that have agreed to serve as consultation resources and service providers to the NJDOE and NJCCE are as follows:

- The Character Education Partnership, Washington D.C.
- The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning, Chicago IL
- The Princeton Center for Leadership Training, Princeton, NJ
- Center for New Media Teaching and Learning, Columbia University, New York, NY
- The Civics Education Consortium at the Eagleton Institute of Politics
- The College of New Jersey, Trenton, NJ

- Fairleigh Dickinson University, College of Education, Madison, NJ

In addition, the following higher education based organizations have expressed a strong interest in being involved in the NJDOE project, but cannot be included as collaborating partners at this time because they have expressed interest in serving as resources to institutions that are part of the bidders list to become the New Jersey Center for Character Education: University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey – Behavioral Research and Training Institute and Center for Healthcare Ethics and Behavioral HealthCare; Rutgers, the State University – Center for Applied Psychology and Center for Effective School Practice; Montclair State University – College of Education and Human Services; and Richard Stockton College of New Jersey – Education Program.

For additional information regarding the strengths of these partners, please see section 1. of this narrative and the letters of support and commitment from each partner in Appendix B.

5. Evaluating the Success of the Project

[Selection Criteria (5): The extent to which the factors to be considered in evaluating the success of the project will be clearly identified and the quality of the plan for evaluating the project.]

Factors to be considered in evaluating the success of the project

The NJDOE plan for evaluating the Partnerships in Character Education Program is based on the following perspective:

- A recognition of the importance in establishing a solid basis of evidence that supports the decision to utilize public resources for character education and the importance of discriminating between effective and ineffective program choices and implementation strategies;

- A four-year history of evaluation efforts in the state operated districts (Newark, Paterson and Jersey City), the largest and most complex urban educational environments in New Jersey;
- The recognition that there are two distinct needs for program evaluation and evidence of effectiveness:
 1. A need to evaluate program implementation outcomes for all of the LEAs that are offered service opportunities through the Partnerships in Character Education Grant Program.
 2. A need to intensively evaluate character education program effect outcomes on students using rigorous methods for the designated collaborating LEA partner school districts;
- The recognition that the potential for using true experimental designs is unlikely because of the complexity of the changes currently occurring in most schools related to new curriculum standards, assessments, school reform efforts, staff and student transience and exposure to a variety of character education initiatives and life skill programs.
- The importance of promoting and supporting the ability of educators to thoughtfully consider the program choices they make in the context of an ongoing improvement process, through means such as logic modeling, concept mapping and action research.

Evaluation Plan

The SEA responsibility for evaluation spans the need for both general program implementation activity and outcomes measures and the ability to intensively test specific programs and alternative character education program designs and their impact on students, staff, parents, and school climate.

1. Expand and refine existing program implementation measures for all participating LEAs.

The Authorizing Legislation for the Partnerships in Character Education Program requires that SEA applicants must both link with specific collaborating partner LEAs, and “...assist other interested local educational agencies that are not members of the original partnership in designing and establishing character education programs (section 5431(e)(2)(E)).” In New Jersey, the state’s character education initiative, which built on earlier USDOE grant funded activity, has already involved at least one school in each of the state’s more than 590 school districts and most charter schools. While no formal evaluation standards were required of schools participating in this initiative, the NJDOE has collected reports on project outcomes from 658 schools. Among the findings from the first year reports (New Jersey Character Education Partnership Initiative Report on Year One Outcomes, May 2002) are:

- 270,377 students were reached;
- Respect, responsibility and caring were the core values stressed by more than 80% of participating schools;
- Staff observations and student feedback were the most commonly used evaluation methods, followed by parent observations.

A few districts also used standardized or locally developed survey instruments to measure program impact (for example, 40 schools used pre- and post-test school climate surveys). The goal of this part of the evaluation plan will be to strengthen the evaluation strategies used by districts receiving state character education aid by:

- a) Revising the basic reporting form used by districts based on recommendations of the Evaluation Expert Panel (see objective 6.4);
- b) Making specific evaluation technical assistance available through the NJDOE website (and posting the dialogue in Q and A format on the site), as well as including evaluation as a theme in planning technical assistance conferences (see objectives 4.3 and 4.6.);
- c) Utilizing state resources to contract with an experienced program evaluator to provide on-site and electronic technical assistance to approximately 25 school districts (in addition to the collaborating partners LEAs) that have expressed an interest in upgrading their evaluation capabilities and agree to share student outcome results with the NJDOE; and
- d) Including in the work plan for the NJCCE analysis of evaluation activities grouped by program goals, data collection methods, evaluation design/models, data analysis procedures and reporting strategies in order to assist NJDOE in communicating evaluation findings to all participating LEAs and reporting on the impact of character education statewide (see objective 2.3).

2. Provide for an intensive four-year evaluation of science-based programs selected by the ten collaborating LEA partners.

This part of the evaluation plan is described in detail under the Competitive Preference Priority, below.

COMPETITIVE PREFERENCE PRIORITY

In addition to the evaluation of project implementation outcomes described under 5. above, the Department of Education will focus specific attention on evaluating research-based character education programs in the ten collaborating partner LEAs. The Evaluation Expert Panel will play the lead role in providing counsel to the department, based on the draft plans and recommendations of the project evaluators contracted by the NJCCE, who will be assigned to work with the collaborating partner LEAs throughout the project.

The evaluation strategy for each of the ten collaborating LEA partner sites will be based on their selection of programs (see Goals and Objectives, Objectives 3.5, 3.6 and 6.5.); therefore, specific designs cannot be predetermined. Random selection and random assignment of students to experimental and control groups (within the same school) may prove impossible in most LEAs. Collaborating partner LEAs will already have been implementing character education programs for at least three years, as a condition for selection to be demonstration sites (see other selection criteria in Appendix K.). As noted in The Character Education Evaluation Toolkit (The Character Education Partnership, 2002), character education is most effective when integrated into the entire school culture and, therefore, it is difficult to implement a program that includes only part of the student body. However, the plan is to utilize the strongest methods possible to determine project effects on students, including quasi-experimental designs. As indicated in 5. above, the department also considers it important to promote the use of action research and other formative and qualitative strategies in the context of a logic model of evaluation to provide the kind of planning and reflective process that is most useful in furthering staff investment and constructive program evolution.

As examples of the approaches the department will use in its intensive evaluation effort, below are two case studies that are typical, based on current experiences with two of the three predesignated LEA partner districts (Newark, Jersey City and Paterson):

Case 1

Description: School District “A” has not adopted a science based character education curriculum. However, it has already infused character education principles into its language arts and literacy curriculum and has completed an inventory of all of the preventive programs in operation in its more than 40 buildings, as well as committing itself to a multiyear plan. The district conducts an intensive program review and improvement process by NJCCE (involving the district’s character education strategic planning committee, which includes teachers, administrators, parents, community members and students), in grant year 1 (see Objective 3.4).

Evaluation Design: Areas of concern that need to be addressed are targeted as high truancy and disciplinary incident rates. Of special concern is an increased number of bias incidents and low teacher morale. The NJCCE evaluation assistance team assists the district committee in reviewing program options to address these concerns (see Objective 3.5). The district elects to use the grant resources to implement a research based conflict resolution program that satisfies the scientifically based research definition in Appendix II of the grant application package (see Objective 3.6). The program will be implemented in two of the district’s four high schools, with the remaining high schools serving as control sites. The NJCCE evaluation team recommends a pre-post design. During the first year, baseline data will be collected from all four high schools. These data will include demographic data as well as incidents of conflict, fighting, disciplinary

referrals, observational and attitudinal data from staff and achievement data. Over the next three years, progress will be tracked at each of the schools. The assessment tools provided by the conflict resolution program developer will be used, as well as additional measures recommended during the evaluation proposal design review conducted by the Evaluation Expert Panel (see Objective 6.6).

Case 2

Description: School District “B” has been implementing a research-based school social decision making and problem solving program in six of its twelve elementary schools successfully for two years and has some descriptive evaluation information based on teacher questionnaires, but has not attempted a formal evaluation. Following the intensive program review and improvement study guided by NJCCE, the district’s project council elects to continue the program in the six pilot schools and expand it to two more buildings.

Evaluation Design: District B decided to use a quasi-experimental design with a strong participatory action research component (teachers at these schools have already demonstrated their commitment to and interest in evaluating the program). Baseline data will be collected from the 12 elementary schools during year one. Using established measures of problem solving and social decision making, data will be collected about students from each of the schools during years two through four. Each normed and validated measure will be selected based on its appropriateness for use with elementary school students and its reported psychometric properties following review and approval by the Evaluation Expert Panel (the Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory¹ has the longest history with this age group, and would be recommended). Since the focus of this program is at the elementary level, assessments will include teacher reports. A measure that has proven useful but is still in the process of validation,

¹ Multi-Health Systems, 2000

the Profile of Students Social Decision Making Strengths (a teacher rating scale), will also be further tested. Cross-school comparisons will allow for examination of program outcomes across three types of schools: experienced, newly implemented, and control. Teachers at the school will be involved in designing and conducting the evaluation with the assistance of the NJCCE evaluation team.

These two case study examples highlight the importance of the interaction between the NJCCE evaluation team, and the local district character education committee or project council, with technical review and backup support from the Evaluation Expert Panel. The team works to ensure a match between need and program, encourages action research as practitioner research², and assures adoption and implementation of a sound research design. The school district documents its activities and outcomes and NJCCE provides data collection, analysis and report writing assistance so that the NJDOE can assist other districts, both in New Jersey and the nation, in considering replication of the project.

² McNiff, J., Lomax, P. & Whitehead, J. (1996). *You and your action research project*. New York: Routledge.

